



# Harney Basin Wetlands Initiative

A landscape-level view of the Harney Basin Wetlands, Harney County, Oregon



## Partnership Overview

The Harney Basin Wetlands Initiative focuses on the health of Malheur Lake and surrounding wetlands, where traditional flood irrigation, haying and grazing provide important seasonal habitat for migratory birds. HBWI partners are working with private landowners to maintain these important flood-irrigated wet meadows and to reduce or eliminate carp, a damaging invasive fish species that has dramatically reduced habitat values and water quality in Malheur Lake. Conservation actions in the Harney Basin help waterbirds and other species migrating through the area, providing wide-ranging benefits throughout the Pacific Flyway. Local ranching families continue to generate sustainable economic returns as they implement these management practices.

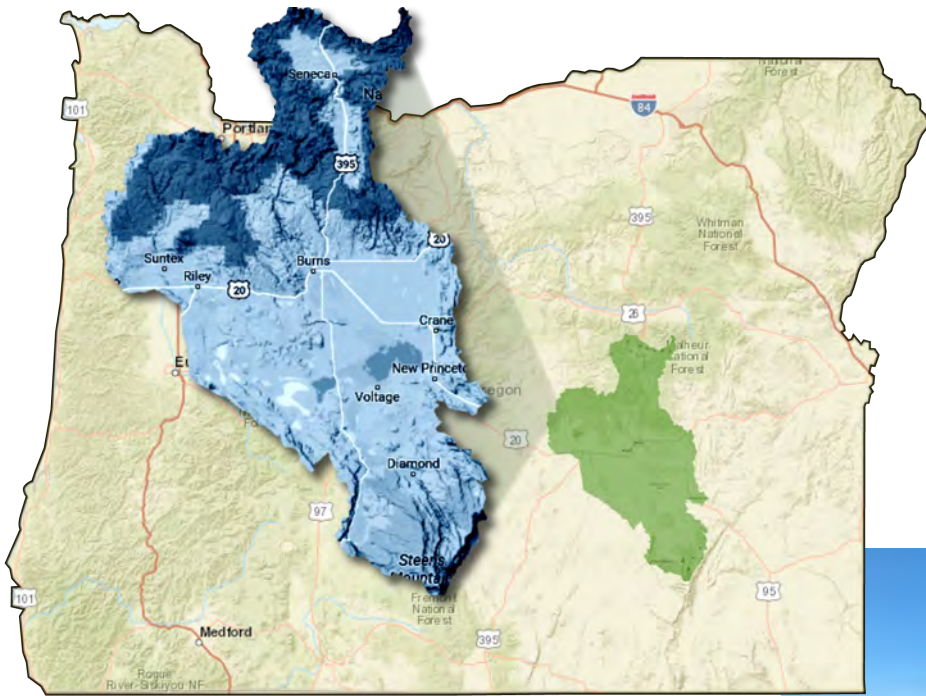
In January 2016, Harney Basin Wetlands Initiative was awarded funding through the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's (OWEB) Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grant program. A FIP is an OWEB investment that addresses a board-identified priority of significance to the state, achieves clear and measurable ecological outcomes, uses integrated and results-oriented approaches as identified through the HBWI Strategic Action Plan, and is implemented by a high-performing partnership.

Initiatives are eligible for up to 6 years of OWEB funding. For the 2017-2019 biennium, OWEB has awarded the partnership \$1,970,000 for conservation projects addressing carp control and maintaining wet meadow habitats in the basin. When combined with investments from 2015 – 2021, the anticipated total investment is approximately \$6,250,000.

## Core Implementing Partners

- Burns-Paiute Tribe
- Ducks Unlimited
- Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
- Harney County Court
- Harney County Watershed Council
- Harney Soil and Water Conservation District
- High Desert Partnership
- Intermountain West Joint Venture
- Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation
- Portland Audubon Society
- The Wetlands Conservancy





Crew sampling fish to check on habitat quality



Crew investigating measures of wetland health

## Ecological Outcomes

The Harney Basin Wetlands Initiative has identified specific strategies to restore wetlands and aquatic habitat in Malheur Lake and throughout the Harney Basin. Specific ecological outcomes will be assessed throughout the 6-year time frame, but some desired ecological outcomes will only become evident over a longer period of time.

Strategies and anticipated results in the Harney Basin Wetlands Initiative include:

### Strategy

Restore Malheur Lake and surrounding aquatic systems that have been damaged by the spread of invasive carp

#### Conservation Action

Control carp populations using a variety of methods agreed on by all partners

#### Intermediate Ecological Outcome

Recovery of aquatic vegetation and invertebrates provides food for migratory bird populations and other native fish and wildlife

#### Long-Term Ecological Outcome

Healthy populations of migratory birds that depend on access to wetlands

### Strategy

Manage wetlands and flood-irrigated wet meadows on refuge and private lands in Harney Basin

#### Conservation Action

Recruit and engage local landowners to improve and maintain on-farm surface water delivery through restoration and conservation actions

#### Intermediate Ecological Outcome

Increased and/or sustained wet meadow acreage (bioenergetic resources for migratory birds); enhanced native meadow plant communities (reduced invasive reed canary grass composition)

#### Long-Term Ecological Outcome

- Healthy populations of migratory birds that depend on access to wetlands
- Continue to support traditional agricultural activities